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# PIEDMONT TRAIL EXTENDS MST VISION

A 6.5-mile trail segment created by Raleigh was folded into the piedmont span of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST) in November.

Dee Freeman, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, designated the Neuse River Trail as a part of the MST just before a dedication event at the

trailhead next to the Falls Lake dam.

The trail is part of Raleigh's expanding greenway system and, for practical purposes, extends a 31-mile MST segment that had already been designated and which rambles across the Falls Lake State Recreation Area to the dam.

In turn, the new 6.5-

mile trail will eventually grow to 28 miles, extending eastward to the Johnston County border.

Congressman Brad Miller of Wake County told a crowd of more than 50 attending the dedication that the trail is one of many drawing cards for businesses considering relocation in the Triangle.

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# HANGING ROCK MARKS 75TH BIRTHDAY

Of course, it's scenery and green space and habitat. But, a state park can be much more, and people whose own histories are intertwined with the history of Hanging Rock State Park reflected on that during the park's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October.

Several couples who met and/or were married in the park attended the celebration, as did elderly gentlemen whose lives were shaped as "CCC boys" and retirees who came of age as rangers on Hanging Rock's ridges.

The reunion drew 59 current and former staff members from as far away as Kansas and Idaho.

"One of the greatest things we had going for us up here was friends," said Bill Norris, who worked as a lifeguard



*SUPERINTENDENT DAVE COOK, LEFT, GATHERS REUNION ATTENDEES FOR A GROUP PHOTO NEAR ONE OF THE PARK'S STONE PICNIC SHELTERS.*

at the park's lake in the mid-1960s.

Norris' nostalgia included the admission that he "never refused an invitation for supper at a campsite," during summers at the park in Stokes County.

Park Superintendent Dave Cook acknowledged the date of the celebration was a bit arbitrary since the "birth" of the state park was a drawn-out affair.

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# RESERVATIONS SYSTEM GETS HONORS

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers recognized the state parks system's centralized reservations system (CRS) as a national finalist for its 2011 Recognition Awards. The CRS entry, which was submitted in the "Digital Government: Government to Citizen" category,

was among 30 finalists selected from more than 100 nominations in 10 categories.

The Division of Parks and Recreation established the reservations system as part of its E-Commerce initiative after it became one of the most requested services of park visitors. The parks system, working

with DENR and state information technology and purchase and contract staffs, established a contract for the creation, management and support for the reservations system.

The overall service includes a fulfillment center, a call center and all of the related hardware, software, and telecommunications equipment needed for a fully functioning "turnkey" system.

Overnight visitors to the state parks system are now able to register for campsites online via the Internet or by calling in to a call center operator. Customers can also reserve picnic shelters and other facilities as part of the new system. This new service is one of the most significant advances in terms of visitor service in the history of the state parks system.

The state parks system launched the full-service Internet- and call center-based reservations system in July 2009 for its nearly 3,000 campsites as well as picnic shelters, cabins, community buildings and other facilities.

Reservations can be made for visits to state parks, either online at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov) or by calling toll free to 1-877-7 CAMP NC (722-6762). Visitors can reserve campsites at most state parks for a single night or more, and campsites and facilities can usually be reserved as quickly as 48 hours beforehand or up to 11 months in advance.

A \$3 surcharge per night's stay or per reservation supports the operation of the system. The state of North Carolina did not make any out-of-pocket expenditures for system development.

## From The Director's Desk

Many of our state parks are closely intertwined with the history of North Carolina. Besides the obvious connection at Fort Macon, there are strong historic elements at Morrow Mountain, Pettigrew and Fort Fisher to name just a few. In fact it can be hard to separate the history of any area from the natural resources that shape people's lives.

But, we're entering a new era in North Carolina in which our state parks essentially are becoming historic sites on their own. Hanging Rock State Park celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this fall with a grand reunion of former rangers, superintendents, Civilian Conservation Corps workers, lifeguards, park attendants and just folks from the area who practically grew up in the park. This park and several others were creations of the CCC during the Great Depression when North Carolina citizens seized the opportunity to set aside some great natural areas as a public works program provided recreation facilities. Hanging Rock is a place where history was written. A number of our other parks will celebrate similar anniversaries in the next few years leading up to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state parks system in 2016. As the oldest system in the South and one of the oldest in the nation, the entire system is – in one sense – a historic site. As they age gracefully, our parks will be highly treasured for their history as well as their natural resources.

Special attention must also be given this month to our environmental education program. Education is a core element of our mission. The Junior Ranger effort was recognized as exceptional by the National Association of Interpretation, and the entire program was selected the state's Outstanding Environmental Education Partner. And, several parks staged workshops for the North American Association for Environmental Education Conference. It's always nice to be honored by peers, and our rangers who present interpretive programs and our team of education specialists represent North Carolina well on the national stage.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford



# WILDLIFE GROUP HONORS STATE PARKS

Lewis Ledford, director of the state parks system, was presented the Conservationist of the Year Award in August in a presentation of the 48th Annual Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards. The event is sponsored by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation and the National Wildlife Federation.

In addition, Kyle Kittelberger, a volunteer and seasonal employee at Falls Lake State Recreation Area, was named Youth Conservationist of the Year. And, Great Outdoor Provision Co., a Raleigh-based outdoors retailer and frequent partner of the state parks system, was chosen Business Conservationist of the Year.

The program highlights individuals and organizations that exemplify conservation activism in 20 award categories.

The organizations said that Ledford, who began as an entry-level park ranger to become director of the agency, "shaped the state parks system to be the envy of the nation, with programs as far-ranging as energy efficiency and massive and much-needed expansion."

During the past eight years, the system has launched seven new state parks and five new state natural areas, bringing more than 44,000 acres under its stewardship.

Kittelberger, a rising high school senior, built a series of improvements to a wildlife observation trail and recycling stations at Falls Lake. He also volunteers as a naturalist for Wake Audubon and the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences.

Great Outdoor Provision Co. was recognized for its contributions to stewardship and land protection, including the Mountains-to-Sea



*DIVISION DIRECTOR LEWIS LEDFORD, AT RIGHT, TOP PHOTO, AND KYLE KITTELBERGER, CENTER, BOTTOM PHOTO WERE HONORED BY THE FEDERATION.*

Trail, a unit of the state parks system. The company also supports the Junior Ranger program in the state parks.

The Conservation Organization of the Year award went to the Muddy Sneakers program that introduces youngsters in mountain areas to their natural heritage. They are frequent visitors to state parks including Chimney Rock and Gorges.



## CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGERS

*JONATHAN GRIFFITH, LEFT, SUPERINTENDENT OF SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, AND BRYAN DOWDY, RIGHT, CHIEF RANGER FOR THE PARKS SYSTEM, GRADUATED FROM STATE GOVERNMENT'S CER-*

*TIFIED PUBLIC MANAGERS CURRICULUM. AWARDING THEIR CERTIFICATES WAS MANLY WILDER, CHIEF DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES.*



*PARK VISITORS HAVE BEEN  
GENEROUS WITH COMPLI-  
MENTS ABOUT THE NEW  
1.8-MILE SUMMIT TRAIL  
AT ELK KNOB STATE PARK  
THAT WAS LARGELY BUILT BY  
VOLUNTEERS.*



## Rocky Road

### ***VOLUNTEERS COMPLETE ELK KNOB TRAIL***

The summit view is spectacular. But Park Superintendent Larry Trivette knows it's not the destination that's important; it's the journey.

Trivette and a cadre of loyal volunteers celebrated their journey in September, completing a 1.8-mile summit trail at Elk Knob State Park in Watauga County, a project that consumed more than 6,000 hours of labor over five and a half years.

Almost every Saturday dawned on Trivette and at least a few of the volunteers inching the trail toward a crest about 1,500 feet above the park's entrance.

On a foggy Sunday afternoon, they savored the last workday.

"Not many people get the opportunity to do something that has the ability to positively impact the lives of many people and generations," Trivette told the group. "You folks are part of the few that have had that opportunity. You are leaving behind a hiking trail that for many years down the road, hundreds and thousands of feet will travel."

The trail has already become the focal point of the young state park.

When Elk Knob State Natural Area was created in 2003, rangers found a barely navigable, steep and exhausting vehicle trail as the only route to the summit.

At 5,520 feet, it's the highest peak wholly within Watauga County and offers stunning views of the Blue Ridge.

The land was re-designated a state park in 2007 and austere interim facilities were com-

pleted in 2008, including a ranger station, picnic grounds and parking areas.

Soon after coming to the park in 2004, Trivette began planning a more aesthetic and environmentally sustainable route to the top.

"I would guess that not since the CCC days has a project like this been proposed, much less attempted in North Carolina state parks," he said.

Many volunteers were recruited from the ranks of Appalachian State University students encouraged by their professors. Others came from scout groups, outdoors clubs and civic organizations. Their ages ranged from six to 74.

Together, they saved the state of North Carolina an estimated \$425,000, Trivette said.

That's based on a common estimate of \$45 per linear foot for trail construction in the mountains, not to mention design fees that might

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 5*



*ONE OF THE LAST LOADS OF GRAVEL NEARS THE SUMMIT.*



# AUTHORITY TARGETS PARK MAINTENANCE

MOUNT MITCHELL – Members of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Authority have approved the allocation of \$796,194 for maintenance and repairs across the North Carolina state parks system.

The authority approved the funding at its Oct. 14 meeting at Mount Mitchell State Park.

Since 1996, a portion of the trust fund has been set aside each year for the general maintenance needs of each park. The funds are used for life/safety issues and routine maintenance items such as roof replacements, waterline repairs, broken glass, pump and well repairs, protective shelter for equipment and bringing facilities up to current codes.

The \$796,194 represents the total anticipated PARTF funding for all state park projects for fiscal year 2011-12 due to the reallocation of \$8.4 million to the General Fund, \$6 million to the system's operating funds and \$7.2 million in repayments for certificates of participation used in major land acquisition projects in recent years.

"Without the transfer of the PARTF funds to the Division of Parks and Recreation's operating budget, we would not have been able to keep all of the parks open," Division Director Lewis Ledford said. "Needless to say, we continue to fight through these challenging budgetary times

in North Carolina."

Ledford provided an update on the division, including a further breakdown of PARTF revenue and projections and legislative initiatives from the recent General Assembly session.

In other business, the board approved a list of local government projects pending available funds based upon a previously approved priority list.

Carol Tingley presented an update on the status of the Mountain-to-Sea Trail, which was proposed in the 1970s as an effort to link Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Jockey's Ridge State Park on the Outer Banks. Today, over 530 miles of the 1,000-mile route are designated.

Partners across North Carolina are helping to plan and build the trail to link communities together and to serve as the backbone of a growing system of land and water trails, according to Tingley, who said the route, when completed, will pass through 37 counties containing about 40 percent of the state's population.

At the conclusion of the meeting, acting Park Superintendent Bryan Wilder provided a program describing the park and conducted a brief tour to the summit and new observation deck at Mount Mitchell State Park.

## ELK KNOB

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have approached \$50,000.

The park spent \$43,054, mostly for hand tools and gravel.

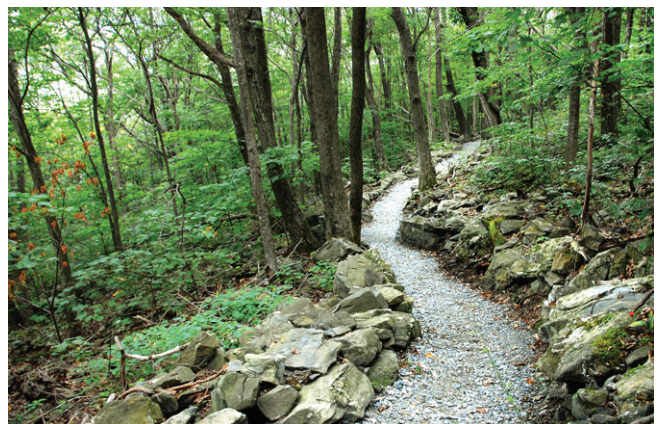
The resulting trail has already drawn high praise from hikers. It offers a gradual climb, its single-track lined by native stone for much of the way and punctuated by stone steps and trailside benches.

It encourages hikers to stop and ponder the rare mountain plant species along the way.

Trivette told his volunteers that machines could have built a trail much faster, but creating it by hand returned something special to them.

"Each of you have used your talents and left a special part of you on this mountain," he said. "Just think of all the rocks in the walls along the way to the summit. Each rock was touched by human hands and gently placed in the wall to hopefully remain for generations to come..."

"You folks, the volunteers, have no idea



*TRAIL IS LINED WITH ROCK FOR MUCH OF ITS LENGTH.* how many times you inspired us, the staff, to keep going."

As sunshine broke through on the mountaintop ceremony, the group sipped sparkling grape juice and Trivette quoted Sir. Edmund Hillary, the first man to summit Mt. Everest: "It's is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves."

# JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM RECOGNIZED

The state parks' Junior Ranger program has received the 2011 Media Award as an exceptional educational resource from the National Association of Interpretation (NAI). The NAI is a professional organization serving venues such as parks, nature centers, museums, historic sites and aquariums.

The Junior Ranger program promotes youth environmental education in the 39 state parks and state recreation areas, and is a partnership effort of the state parks system, the statewide Friends of State Parks and retailer Great Outdoor Provision Company.

"Becoming a Junior Ranger allows a young person to directly connect with nature in a personal way, and it's a family activity that nurtures stewardship of North Carolina's rich natural heritage," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director.

"In the state parks, the program is part of a broad education effort that includes interactive exhibit halls, trail-side displays and interpretive programs with our rangers."

Children ages 6-12 can



*THE JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM NURTURES A SENSE OF STEWARDSHIP .*

earn one of 26 unique Junior Ranger patches by completing activities listed in a Junior Ranger booklet and available at state parks or on the division's website.

The activities include simple stewardship projects and attending ranger-led programs. A "Turtle Tracks and Turkey Trails" newsletter includes natural history lessons and space where junior rangers

can share their own nature photos and artwork.

The Junior Ranger program was a favored project of the late John Graham, former president of the Friends of State Parks, which coordinates its support. Since 2005, Great Outdoor Provision Company, based in Raleigh, has been primary sponsor, providing funds for patches and booklet and newsletter printing.

## EDUCATION PROGRAM TOP NC PARTNER

This fall, the state parks system's education program won prestigious recognition as North Carolina's "Outstanding Environmental Education Partner Organization" from the Environmental Educators of North Carolina.

The award was presented for the state parks' breadth of impact in environmental education and for its support of state and national environmental education efforts.

The system's rangers and other park staff, who stage interpretive programs, share the recognition with division specialists, who help them prepare the programs and themes, said Sean Higgins, director of the program.

"Every time I look at the training calendar, I see new partnership workshops for teachers being offered at parks across the state," he said. "When I read a positive news

article about environmental education, more often than not I can think of a way we supported the effort."

Each year, education programs by rangers reach more than a quarter million visitors, and more than 1,000 adult educators attend day-long training workshops led by state park staff.

On the state level, the parks system is a core partner

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# EDUCATION TEAM HELPS WITH CONFERENCE

Several state parks and the system's education team provided on-the-ground support for the North American Association for Environmental Education Conference Oct. 12-15. The event drew more than 1,000 educators to Raleigh.

Field trips for conference participants were held at William B. Umstead State Park, Falls Lake State Recreation Area and Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve with demonstrations of the parks' educational efforts. For example, at Umstead, Ranger Jack Singley and education specialist Brian Bockhahn staged a children's interpretive program making boats of recyclable materials and testing them in a creek.

One of the more popular seminars was presented by Park Superintendents Keith Nealson and Joe Shimel, who presented "Shake, Rattle & Learn" about using music in interpretive programs.

District education specialists Kelly Hoke and Brittany Whitaker attended the conference, with Hoke serving on the conference planning



*EDUCATION SPECIALIST BRIAN BOCKHAHN, LEFT, AND RANGER JACK SINGLEY TEST RECYCLABLE BOATS.*

team. And, Sean Higgins, manager of the education team, manned a "Welcoming to North Carolina" exhibit designed with help from Martin Kane of the exhibits staff and Merchants Millpond State Park staff.

## PARTNER

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6*

for Take a Child Outside Week and Envirothon events for schoolchildren.

And, state parks have partnered with Friends of State Parks and Great Outdoor Provision Company to expand the Junior Ranger program into all the state parks.

A long list of other state partners has included the boy and girl scouts, 4-H programs, the Society for Hispanic Professionals, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, home schooling organizations and North Carolina Audubon.

Just in the past two

years, the state parks system's educators have supported and help stage six conferences, seminars and events of regional and national importance, culminating in the October conference of the North American Association for Environmental Education.



## RANGERS COMMISSIONED

*FOUR RANGERS WERE COMMISSIONED IN SEPTEMBER AT A CEREMONY AT WILLIAM B. UMSTEAD STATE PARK. THEY ARE, LEFT TO RIGHT: NICK BOWMAN, PILOT MOUNTAIN STATE PARK; LUKE APPLING, GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STATE PARK; COLLEEN BOWERS, CARVERS CREEK STATE PARK; AND, NANCY WILLIAMSON, WEYMOUTH WOODS SANDHILLS NATURE PRESERVE.*



# HANGING ROCK

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For \$10 in 1936, the state of North Carolina purchased land that was to become Hanging Rock State Park from the Stokes County Committee for Hanging Rock and the Winston-Salem Foundation.

Those early conservation groups seized an opportunity when developers who had planned a mountaintop resort on the land went bust.

This was roughly a year after 240 men of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had arrived and set up camp on the property. They cleared land and began building roads, a dam and structures with native stone, including a massive bathhouse, picnic shelters and maintenance sheds.

The park opened its gates to the public in 1937 and immediately became a source of jobs for area residents, often young people who lived in the old CCC barracks during the summers.

And, the park immediately became a treasured destination, especially for people from nearby Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Wilkesboro and Mt. Airy.

The park has since doubled in size to 7,049 acres, and it welcomed more than a half million visitors in 2010.

The CCC boys worked hard – sometimes with little more than shovels and axes – but were fed well and had a sense of working for the greater good on projects that would be remembered.

That brought a sense of pride, said Dr. Harley Jolley, a historian and author of the CCC history, *That Magnificent Army of Youth and Peace*.

Following the reunion's picnic lunch, Jolley described CCC life during a session of reminiscences in the bathhouse.

"In my case, I started at a camp in Lexington, moved to Yellowstone and then moved to Death Valley," Jolley said. "Those were the good old days."

Jolley pointed to the intricate, exposed, timber framing of the bathhouse. "Look at this building. Look at the beauty. Look what men with no basic training could do."

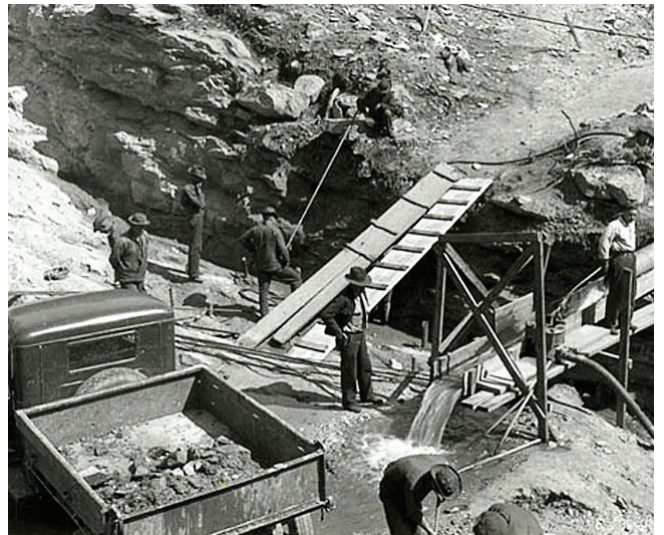
The CCC "gave me good health and good friends," he said. "It gave me a good opportunity to travel across the nation and realize what a magnificent heritage I'm blessed with...and you're blessed with."

Hanging Rock was one of five state parks



*HISTORIAN DR. HARLEY JOLLEY, HIMSELF A CCC VETERAN, TALKS ABOUT THE MEN'S CRAFTSMANSHIP, created with the help of Depression-era works projects. Added to Mount Mitchell and Fort Macon, they became the nucleus of the state parks system.*

"The history of Hanging Rock State Park is similar to that of others in the system, in that people in the community took the initiative to conserve an iconic landmark and looked to state government for help with their vision," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "The treasure of spectacular mountain ridges, dramatic waterfalls and outdoor recreation that we have today is the result of that foresight and commitment."



*CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS WORKERS IN THE MID-1930S BEGIN BUILDING THE PARK'S LAKE DAM.*



# MARINES RELAY-HIKE TRAIL FOR CAUSE

In relay fashion, a group of 19 Camp Lejeune-based Marines hiked the entire Mountains-to-Sea Trail in 43 days this fall to raise funds and awareness for a charity that supports injured veterans.

Calling themselves the Fortunate Sons, the Marines attacked the 1,000-mile trek with two- and three-man teams hiking a week at a time, often accompanied by trail guide Scott Ward.

The teams covered 20-30 miles in each 10-hour hiking day, camping along the way if donated shelter was not available.

All the Fortunate Sons are combat veterans and some are Purple Heart recipients.

The effort was to raise funds for the Semper Fi Fund, which aids Marines, sailors and members of other service branches injured while supporting Marine missions.

"Some hike in honor of fallen comrades, others in hope that their efforts will raise money for a phenomenal cause, but all will hike because they have the utmost gratitude and admiration

## MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA

"In addition to just being totally cool, it has an environmental benefit and an economic benefit and I'm glad to be part of that," he said.

Coordinators with the state parks system's trails program are working with local governments to the west in Hillsborough and to the east in Clayton and are optimistic that hikers will be able to traverse more than 100 miles of trail between those towns within 10 years.

About 530 miles within the 1,000-mile corridor of the MST has been completed as hiking trail, the remainder being routed along existing roads.

Each year, it attracts more through-hikers including a group of Marines this fall that completed a 43-day relay hike to raise funds for wounded veterans.



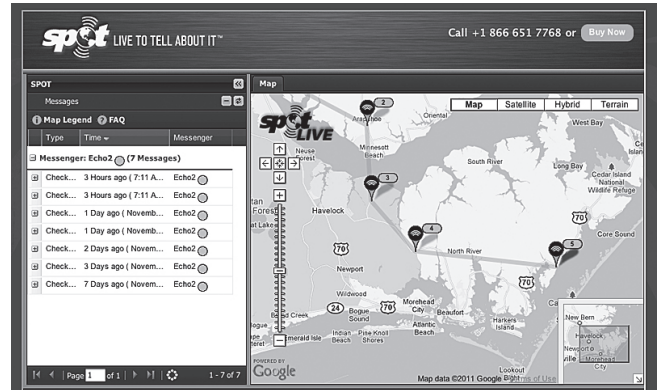
*THE NEUSE RIVER TRAIL HAS ALREADY BECOME A POPULAR DESTINATION FOR HIKERS, JOGGERS AND CYCLISTS IN THE NORTH RALEIGH AREA.*

Freeman said Raleigh is among a select group of local governments that have realized the value of the trail and have stepped forward as partners

with the state. That will likely prompt other communities to join the effort.

"All of us pulling to-

*CONTINUED ON PAGE 14*



*A TRACKING MAP ALLOWED THE PUBLIC TO FOLLOW THE MARINES' PROGRESS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA.* for those that have sacrificed so much," reads the group's website.

The project was supported not only by website but a blog and satellite updates that tracked the hikers' progress.

The hikers began their march Oct. 2 on Clingman's Dome in the Great Smoky Mountains that was covered with rime ice. They finished Nov. 13 – two days after Veterans Day – at Jockey's Ridge State Park.

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*JENNIFER PHARR DAVIS, ABOVE, HELPS LEAD SCHOOL STUDENTS ON PART OF THE OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY TRAIL. AT RIGHT, PERIOD COSTUMES LEND REALISM.*



## NEW MARCH ON OVERMOUNTAIN TRAIL

By Ranger Jamie Cameron  
Lake James State Park

It wasn't the first time the noisy, babbling waters of Paddy's Creek were mixed with the sound of marching footsteps. Back in 1780, it was a courageous band of American frontiersmen on the track of a troublesome Loyalist major and his army.

Almost two and a half centuries after Isaac Shelby and John Sevier led the "Overmountain Men" in pursuit of Maj. Patrick Ferguson, a handful of dedicated re-enactors retraced those steps in October through what is now Lake James State Park and its one-mile section of the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail.

To fill out their ranks, members of the Overmountain Victory Trail Association Inc. invited about 80 fourth graders from nearby Nebo Elementary School and a very special guest to lead them: Jennifer Pharr Davis, who recently completed the unofficial fastest through-hike of the 2,175-mile Appalachian Trail in 46 days, 11 hours and 20 minutes.

After setting the stage for the sequence of events that led the ragtag assortment of southern Appalachian settlers and mountain men to take up arms against their British oppressors, the OVTA re-enactors, complete with period costumes and muskets, took the children on a hike through history and the days leading to victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain on the South Carolina border.

According to OVTA member Marc Bowen, it's a story of freedom and sacrifice that bears retelling. In fact, the OVTA motto is "Keeping the Story Alive," and its 300 members do that every autumn in more than a dozen events similar to the one held at Lake James State Park.

"We try to stand in the exact places the (Overmountain) men stood to tell the stories," Brown said. "We teach them to around 7,000 fourth graders annually."

For Park Superintendent Sean McElhone, hosting the event for the second time in the new 3,000-acre Paddy's Creek Area fit perfectly with the state parks system's mission.

"We see this as a great opportunity to get local schoolchildren into the park and learn about the historic significance of this area, especially in how it relates to the American Revolution," he said.

Before boarding their school buses and returning to class, the students were treated to a nine-gun salute by OVTA members. It was a fitting end to a morning dedicated to history and exercise in the great outdoors.

"Think about it," said Pharr Davis. "This is the first time in the history of the world that we get to go hiking for fun...and where we live in western North Carolina is one of the best places in the world to do it. The trails at Lake James State Park are beautiful and open all year long. I plan to come back very soon and I hope these kids will too."



# GRANDFATHER OPENS INTERIM OFFICE

Grandfather Mountain State Park held a grand opening of a new temporary park office in September. The office is in a commercial building on N.C. 105 in Banner Elk on the mountain's northern flank.

Throughout the afternoon, visitors learned about improvements at the park since the initial purchase of 2,456 acres of the attraction's backcountry in 2009.

Friends of High Country State Parks used the occasion to recruit volunteers for projects at Grandfather Mountain and other area state parks such as Elk Knob, New River and Mount Jefferson.

Lewis Ledford, state parks director, welcomed guests and recognized state Rep. Mitch Gillespie, whose district will include the state park pending a redistricting initiative.

Park rangers conducted activities for youngsters that included turtle claw printing, fish-finding games and the opportunity to create trails on a clay mountain.

The state park offers 11 miles of wilderness trails and 13 backpacking campsites, and rangers and volunteers continue to improve those facilities.

The state parks system, the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation and other organizations are pursuing a partnership to construct an educational facility on property owned by the foundation near the mountain's summit, which would allow for permanent state park offices and visitor amenities.



*GRANDFATHER MOUNTAIN STATE PARK STAFF USED THE OCCASION TO TALK ABOUT THE NEW PARK AND EXPLAIN RECENT CHANGES TO VISITORS.*



## NATURE DAY

*SOUTH MOUNTAINS STATE PARK HELD ITS ANNUAL NATURE DAY EVENT IN SEPTEMBER WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED VISITORS ATTENDING. A FAVORITE ACTIVITY WAS BUILDING BIRDBHOUSES.*



# PARK'S 'GRAND CAMP' COMING OF AGE

For seven-year-old Benjamin Knight and his aunt Julie Knight, this pizza-making session was a breeze.

The pair had already spent some time together creating pizzas, but this time it was for show at Grand Camp at Haw River State Park. Kids and their grandparents (or significant stand-ins) were making pizzas just before lunch that would be cooked for their evening meals.

"Seeing him catch three fish yesterday was a highlight, really. I'm just getting to enjoy the outdoors with him. He is one of my favorite people," said Knight, a commercial photographer from Chapel Hill.

This is the fourth year the environmental education center at the state park has staged Grand Camp and it's been wildly popular. A second, three-day camp was added and some grandparents have asked about adding another night to the stay. Most of the participants are from central North Carolina and many have returned for a second or third year.

"With Grand Camp, we hope to create time and space for grandparents to be with their grandchildren without interruptions – from parents or other grandchildren for instance," said Kathryn Royall, chief naturalist at the education center, whose son and father participated this year.

"We also hope to challenge each to try new things, so they can watch and experience growth together."

The pizza-making sessions were added in 2010 to augment more traditional state park fare such as nature hikes, crafts, campfire sessions, canoeing and fishing. Royall said cooking is a "family unit" activity in which grandparents can



*BENJAMIN KNIGHT, 7, AND HIS AUNT JULIE KNIGHT SHOW THEIR SKILLS IN A PIZZA-MAKING SESSION.*

often display some of their hard-won experience.

One long nature hike was spiced by mimicking the CSI television series. Clues were distributed along the trails that led young and old investigators to discover the habitats and habits of wild animals.

There has been plenty of learning for grandparents and kids, but also lessons along the way for Royall and her staff.

It's been a challenge to fine-tune the schedule and the activities for youngsters who are very energetic and grandparents who sometimes are not so much. They found it was valuable to schedule separate downtime for youngsters and oldsters.

And the camp has opened up to aunts, uncles, great aunts and great uncles – perhaps any family adult who wants a meaningful relationship with a child.

"We have learned that grandparents who participate are extremely inquisitive. They are game for almost anything," Royall said. "If the children are doing a craft, they want to do it also."



*'GRAND CAMP' OFFERS GROUP EXPLORATIONS OF THE STATE PARK AS WELL AS SOME QUIET TIME FOR SHARING REFLECTIONS.*



# HELMS TO LEAD CAROLINA BEACH

Chris Helms, a veteran park superintendent and ranger, has been named as superintendent of Carolina Beach State Park in New Hanover County. Helms succeeds Terri Taylor who retired earlier this year.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Helms has been superintendent of Lake



Waccamaw State Park in Columbus County since 2004. A native of Jacksonville, he attended White Oak High School and is a 1991 graduate of the University of North Carolina-Wilmington with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management.

Helms served one year as a seasonal ranger at Fort Macon State Park before being hired as a ranger at Jones Lake State Park in 1991, and he joined the staff at Weymouth Woods State Nature Preserve in 1997. He holds certifications in environmental education, prescribed burning and advanced law enforcement.

"Chris brings with him excellent experience in all phases of state park management as well as a love and deep knowledge of coastal North Carolina," said Lewis Ledford, state parks director. "That will serve him well considering Carolina Beach State Park's contributions as both a valuable natural resource and a tourism destination in that community."

## TURTLES RULE AT HAW RIVER FESTIVAL

A fall festival at Haw River State Park in September introduced people in the community to the new park, but foul weather prevented the park from showing citizens its newest property.

The festival was to be held on a 692-acre tract acquired from the real estate development company Bluegreen in 2008 that lies just west of the state park's Summit Environmental Education Center. Heavy rains kept visitors from the property and events were held on the education center grounds.

A focus at the festival was the Year of the Turtle educational theme with box turtle races, turtle stacking and other games. There were also hayrides, face painting, a campfire and storytelling. The event was co-sponsored by Friends of Haw River State Park.

A master plan was completed in 2010 for Haw River State Park, which encompasses 1,374 acres in Guilford and Rockingham counties near Browns Summit.

The park was authorized in 2003 and the environmental education center was created from conference facilities purchased from the Episcopal Diocese. The master plan calls for more traditional state park uses on the former Bluegreen property, and it will eventually become the principal state park gateway.

The initial phase of park development includes an entrance road and parking area, a

network of hiking trails, restroom facilities and picnic grounds. Work has begun on an extensive loop trail and design of the park's entrance road. Construction is expected to begin in early 2012.

The Division of Parks and Recreation continues to negotiate for additional property along the headwaters of the Haw River to expand the park.

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# MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

gether can accomplish great things,” he said. “Projects such show how we can successfully balance economic growth with conservation.”

Freeman presented Raleigh’s outgoing mayor Charles Meeker with a hiking staff emblazoned with the state parks system logo as a memento.

Secretary Gene Conti of the Department of Transportation said the MST is a vision that will be emulated in other parts of the nation and “changes the way we think about transportation.”



*DEE FREEMAN, RIGHT, SECRETARY OF DENR, PRESENTS A HIKING STAFF TO RALEIGH MAYOR CHARLES MEEKER DURING THE DEDICATION.*



## KAYAK TRAINING

*PARK RANGERS ORGANIZED A FLATWATER KAYAK LEADERSHIP TRAINING SEMINAR IN NOVEMBER AT HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK, DEVELOPING SKILLS IN LEADING TOURS AND DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES.*



## ‘PARK’ IT

**WITH A STATE PARKS  
SPECIALTY LICENSE TAG**



*The Division of Motor Vehicles is accepting applications and payment for these special license plates. There is a \$30 fee in addition to regular license fees (\$60 for personalized plates). Additional fees support conservation through the Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage trust funds.*

**Information at [www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)  
or [www.ncdot.org/dmv](http://www.ncdot.org/dmv)**



# NORTH CAROLINA STATE PARKS

## MONTHLY ATTENDANCE REPORT

### OCTOBER, 2011

NC STATE PARK	October 2011	TOTAL YTD Oct-11	October 2010	TOTAL YTD Oct-10	% CHANGE (2011/2010) Oct YTD	
Carolina Beach State Park	48,918	468,242	60,292	431,374	-19%	9%
Carvers Creek State Park	0	10	225	225	-100%	-96%
Chimney Rock State Park	25,420	150,596	34,963	196,998	-27%	-24%
Cliffs of the Neuse State Park	12,776	147,613	16,605	181,391	-23%	-19%
Crowders Mountain State Park	32,712	320,067	49,117	345,998	-33%	-7%
Dismal Swamp State Park	8,902	66,721	5,889	49,817	51%	34%
Elk Knob State Park	5,640	30,760	3,113	21,078	81%	46%
Eno River State Park including Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area	43,239	422,159	43,726	409,051	-1%	3%
Falls Lake State Recreation Area	49,488	780,631	38,770	762,782	28%	2%
Fort Fisher State Recreation Area	54,475	763,686	61,701	800,086	-12%	-5%
Fort Macon State Park	86,182	1,192,724	96,812	1,237,870	-11%	-4%
Goose Creek State Park	15,212	219,917	20,502	249,108	-26%	-12%
Gorges State Park	9,282	80,552	9,186	69,273	1%	16%
Grandfather Mountain State Park	10,227	42,371	3,002	13,616	241%	211%
Hammocks Beach State Park	7,236	73,976	6,353	86,891	14%	-15%
Haw River State Park	3,113	20,520	2,993	21,965	4%	-7%
Hanging Rock State Park	62,610	467,595	66,189	491,524	-5%	-5%
Jones Lake State Park	7,944	46,267	2,241	41,962	254%	10%
Jordan Lake State Recreation Area	65,153	827,021	103,144	1,031,147	-37%	-20%
Jockey's Ridge State Park	45,605	1,241,995	97,864	1,382,417	-53%	-10%
Kerr Lake State Recreation Area	53,084	1,168,584	49,827	940,089	7%	24%
Lake James State Park	34,402	520,645	36,765	290,534	-6%	79%
Lake Norman State Park	42,861	444,357	45,150	474,402	-5%	-6%
Lake Waccamaw State Park	6,724	77,104	5,640	82,150	19%	-6%
Lumber River State Park	4,748	54,972	7,036	83,526	-33%	-34%
Mayo River State Park	2,584	30,149	2,373	33,008	9%	-9%
Merchants Millpond State Park	21,265	230,385	25,324	205,027	-16%	12%
Medoc Mountain State Park	9,283	69,318	6,945	50,026	34%	39%
Mount Mitchell State Park	59,030	289,736	81,171	332,905	-27%	-13%
Morrow Mountain State Park	45,650	407,199	41,664	332,718	10%	22%
New River State Park including Mount Jefferson State Natural Area	31,466	296,274	40,730	331,742	-23%	-11%
Pettigrew State Park	4,824	58,992	5,508	65,450	-12%	-10%
Pilot Mountain State Park	93,902	384,578	57,911	397,336	62%	-3%
Raven Rock State Park	15,580	127,978	17,729	139,443	-12%	-8%
Singletary Lake State Park	2,224	22,154	2,102	24,772	6%	-11%
South Mountains State Park	20,346	173,704	22,360	199,578	-9%	-13%
Stone Mountain State Park	41,704	408,340	50,288	392,328	-17%	4%
Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve	5,104	45,602	4,791	43,756	7%	4%
William B. Umstead State Park	74,436	766,769	74,580	753,102	-0%	2%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL</b>	<b>1,163,351</b>	<b>12,940,263</b>	<b>1,300,581</b>	<b>12,996,465</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>-0%</b>



## ***Our Mission Remains...***

to protect North Carolina's **natural diversity**;  
to provide and promote **outdoor recreation**  
opportunities throughout North Carolina;  
to exemplify and encourage **good stewardship**  
of North Carolina's natural resources for all  
citizens and visitors.

*8,000 copies of this public document were printed  
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## ***SAFETY ZONE***

### **SAFETY MATTERS ON THE LADDERS**

✓Do not underestimate the danger of falling; falls are a leading cause of accidental injuries both on and off the job.

✓To reach high objects, use a ladder or step stool -- never a box or chair.

✓Follow the 4-to1 rule when using a straight ladder; place its base out at least 1/4 of its height.

✓Always face the ladder when climbing and descending; carry loads in one hand keeping the other on the ladder.

*The Steward*  
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